

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION**

DAVID GARFIELD LAMPSON,)
Plaintiff,)
v.)
LINCOLN COUNTY SHERIFF'S) No. 4:10-CV-962 CAS
DEPARTMENT, et al.,)
Defendants.)

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff (registration no. 34209-044), an inmate at the United States Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$4.03. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the

Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$20.17, and an average monthly balance of \$14.56. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$4.03, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include "legal conclusions" and "[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements." Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a "context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and

common sense.” *Id.* at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” *Id.* The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” *Id.* at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. *Id.* at 1950, 51-52.

The Complaint

Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging violations of his civil rights. Named as defendants are: the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Department; Unknown Lingle (Lieutenant); Sean Brown (Deputy Sheriff); Mike Lang (Deputy Sheriff); and Jordan Wicks (Deputy Sheriff).

Plaintiff alleges that in May of 2007, he was subjected to excessive force during the course of his arrest by Deputy Sheriffs Lang and Wicks. Plaintiff claims that during that same month, he was subjected to false arrest by defendant Lingle. Plaintiff further claims that when his car was impounded by the Sheriff’s Department, defendant Brown unlawfully refused to release the vehicle, failed to return items contained in the vehicle and subjected plaintiff to excessive impound fees.

Discussion

Plaintiff’s claim against the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Department is legally frivolous because the Sheriff’s Department is not a suable entity. *Ketchum v. City of West Memphis*, Ark., 974 F.2d 81, 82 (8th Cir. 1992) (departments or subdivisions of local government are “not juridical entities suable as such.”); *Catlett v. Jefferson County*, 299 F. Supp. 2d 967, 968-69 (E.D. Mo. 2004). Plaintiff’s assertions against the individual defendants are also subject to dismissal.

The complaint is silent as to whether the individual defendants, Lingle, Brown, Lang and Wicks, are being sued in their official or individual capacities. Where a “complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims.” Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir.1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official - Lincoln County. To state a claim against a governmental entity or official in his or her official capacity, plaintiff must allege that a policy or custom of the government is responsible for the alleged constitutional violation. Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978). The instant complaint does not contain any allegations that a policy or custom of Lincoln County was responsible for the alleged violations of plaintiff’s constitutional rights. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim against defendants Lingle, Brown, Lang and Wicks.

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis is **GRANTED**. [Doc. 2]

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$4.03 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to “Clerk, United States District Court,” and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that plaintiff's motion to appoint counsel is **DENIED as moot.** [Doc. 4]

An Order of Dismissal will accompany this Memorandum and Order.



CHARLES A. SHAW
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Dated this 6th day of July, 2010.